

Resurrection, Ascension, and Pentecost

After appearing to his disciples and many of the believers for 40 days, Christ ascended to heaven on the 40th day after resurrection. The stories, wonders, and miracles that preceded Christ's ascension are accounted for in the four Gospels. We believe that Christ miraculously ate with the disciples after Resurrection. However, his entering while the doors were closed and locked was not a miracle! Because He arose from the dead in His glorified body: "There are also celestial bodies and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. ... so also is resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body .." (I Cor 6:40-55).

The celestial body of Christ is what is promised to all believers who will be with him in his glory, because we were created in the image of God and will be like him when we be with him in his glory.

The appearances of Christ are mentioned in Matthew (28), Mark (16), Luke (24), and John (20,21). Also it is mentioned in the first Chapter of the book of Acts for background and continuation. Paul the Apostle also wrote about Christ and his appearances to more than 500 brothers, many of them were alive even at the time of his conversion. He then spoke about his appearing to him on the road to Damascus.

In the Gospel of St. Mark: "Afterwards, he appeared unto the eleven as they sat at meat (to eat) and upbraided (scolded) them for there unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not then which had seen him after he was risen. And he said unto them, go ye into the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:14-17).

In the gospel according to St. Luke, even more accounts of his appearances are mentioned: " ... And behold two of them went out the same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about three score furlongs .. And it came to pass while they commuted together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered all these things, and to enter his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets he explained unto them in all the scripture the things concerning himself .. " (Luke 24).



In the Gospel according to St. John: "Jesus saith unto her (Mary Magdeline) touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father .. Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst and said unto them, Peace be unto you .. And after eight days again his disciples were within and Thomas (the doubter) was with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, reach hither thy finger and behold my hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless but believer." (John 20). [Please read on to the end of John 21.]

About his ascension: St. Matthew wrote: "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them and when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spoke to them saying: All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach the all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost (Spirit): teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world. Amen." (Mat 28:16-20).

St. Luke details these events which took place between the resurrection and ascension even more. He then concludes: "And he (meaning Jesus) led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen." (Luke 24). No one could have painted a more glorified picture of ascension than Luke; a physician and painter. He also was of Greek origin and wrote as well as any one who studied the Greek culture could which is not only inspired but also very appealing. St. Luke continues painting this glorified picture in the first two chapters of the book of Acts which he wrote to a noble man, Theophilus of Alexandria.

The Pentecost season is a beautiful time in the life of the church, and in the life of the individual Christian person. The church performs most of the weddings, ordinations, and joy producing activities in this season in particular. No fasting or matanias but prayers and praises with joy. We feel victory, so much so, that we always sing the song of victory anytime we congregate for prayer, even in funerals, we put aside the prayers of the dead and instead sing the song of victory, as if we are telling the departed: blessed are you to depart now as we commemorate Christ risen, and up in heaven, and the Holy Spirit is with you and all of us to guide, support, and comfort. Jesus Is Risen. He Is Risen Indeed. By death, He defeated death, and those who were in the tombs received the promise of eternal life. Glory be to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. One God. Now and forever and ever. Amen.

Because now there is no condemnation to them who believe and accept Jesus God Incarnate, crucified, buried, risen, and in heaven whose presence is felt every moment through the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth and comfort. The Author can't resist but quote Paul the Apostle: "there is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,

who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit." (Romans 8:1). Walk in the spirit, follow the commandments of our risen Christ. Do it diligently and quickly because the day of the Lord is near and "this same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner" (Acts 1:11).

It is comforting to learn that his departure did not cause sorrow or pain, instead they returned to Jerusalem with great joy. They also continued to meet together in the temple (the house of God) to praise and worship God. Another thing was clear in their minds and it became more vivid in their mind, was expected, after his ascension. This is what he promised them earlier: "But now I go my way to him that sent me, .. It is expedient for you that I go away. for if I go not away, the comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." (John 16:5-12). These words" said Jesus unto his disciples before his passion and they came to pass on the day of Pentecost (50th day following resurrection).

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come (the ninth hour, 3 PM, the middle of the day), they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven (split) tongues like as of fire and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:1-4).

So as we celebrate the feasts of Ascension and Pentecost, we must feel that the commandments given to the Apostles and Holy Disciples are passed onto us and it is our duty to follow them like Simon the son of Youna (Peter) to whom Christ three times said: "Simon the son of Jonas do you love me more than these? Feed my sheep .." (John 21). Those commandments to feed the sheep, which came to us through observing the events of Resurrection, Ascension, and Pentecost can be summarized as follows:

1. Love one another..
2. Continually be in the temple (the Church) to praise and worship him that is above all names. Praising and worshipping and praying always: in all conditions, for all condition, and upon all conditions.
3. Go into all the world, to all nations, preach the gospel to all creatures (all peoples).
4. Advise the new comers to repent and be baptized
5. Cast out devils without fear, because Satan, the prince (ruler), of this world has been condemned (defeated).
- 6.. Speak the new tongue of Love and salvation unto all nations.

Love, because God Is Love, and He is now in us and we are one with him. Feed the sheep, as Jesus fed the multitude not only the food of the flesh but the food of eternal life, the manna that came from heaven, the Word of God and the sacraments of the Church which are gifts of the Holy Spirit. When Christ saw the disciples of Emmaus "he said unto them, what manner of communications are these .. and why you are sad? .." we also should not be sad, because we have the promise of the Father. The same commandment to preach the whole world, baptizing in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit is even more pronounced in the Gospel according to St. Mark,

the Father of our Church: "Go ye into all the world , and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues. They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them .. So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up to heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." (Mark 16).

Nothing is more beautiful, nothing is more pronounced. Preach all creatures, preach, teach, baptize. They shall speak a new tongue, they will speak (witness) for me through the Holy Spirit. They shall have no fear of anything: serpents, evil, poisons or anything you can imagine to befall us, because the Lord is with us when we are with him, when we learn and be sealed by the seal of baptism. Why this was told then?

As Christ completed his works on earth (and before his ascension) he gave the instructions to his saintly apostles and holy disciples to complete the work of the Kingdom of God which he started in his short life, of 33 1/2 years, on earth, and his short service of about 3 1/2 years. I am always reminded that Christ changed the world in a very short period of time. We also can cause wonderful things to happen, wonders and miracles in the name of Christ through the Holy Spirit of God. And this can be accomplished in a short period of time. We just have to cast out all fear, and do the work of the Kingdom of God now, trusting that it is not our own effort, but the works of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church (body of believers). Glory be to God forever. Amen.

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